

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 10, with the following rewritten paragraph:

B1 Figure 1 illustrates the nucleotide sequence (SEQ ID NO:1 and SEQ ID NO:76 for complement strand) and deduced amino acid sequence (SEQ ID NO:2) of caspase-14. The double-stranded nucleotide sequence is shown, with nucleotide position numbers shown on the left and right sides. The encoded amino acids are shown below each row of nucleotides, with stop codons designated by an asterisk. The start codon, which is shown at nucleotide positions 61 to 63, was identified based on the presence of a stop codon upstream of this position (nucleotide positions 49 to 51). Amino acid position numbers are shown on the right side of the sequence, with the letter "a" shown on the left side of the amino acid sequence and the initial methionine designated position 1. The open reading frame encodes caspase-14, which is 257 amino acids in length, and ends with a stop codon at nucleotide positions 832 to 834.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 21, with the following rewritten paragraph:

B2 Figure 2 illustrates the amino acid sequence analysis and primary structure of caspase-14. Figure 2A shows a colinear alignment of the predicted amino acid sequence of procaspase-14 with the amino acid sequence of 8 other known caspases. Noncontiguous sequences of caspase-14 (SEQ ID NOS: 62-68), Mch5 (caspase-8; SEQ ID NOS: 48-54), Mch3 (caspase-7; SEQ ID NOS: 35-41), Mch2 (caspase-6; SEQ ID NOS: 42-47), CPP32 (caspase-3; SEQ ID NOS: 27-34), ICE (caspase-1; SEQ ID NOS: 21-26), and ICH-1 (caspase-2; SEQ ID NOS: 55-61), caspase-11 (SEQ ID NOS: 10-15), caspase-12 (SEQ ID NOS: 16-20) are shown. The amino acid position of the first amino acid shown in the respective proteins is indicated on the left. Figure 2B depicts the primary structure of procaspase-14 represented by a bar diagram. The active site QACRG (SEQ ID NO:3) pentapeptide and potential aspartate processing sites are indicated.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 12, with the following rewritten paragraph:

B3 Figure 10 is an identity comparison between the mouse (SEQ ID NO:2) and human (SEQ ID NO:5) caspase-14 polypeptide sequences as described in Example 1. The mouse sequence is represented on the top line and the human sequence is represented on the bottom line.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 43, line 19, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Following this characterization, amplification of a partial human caspase-14 cDNA from a human brain cDNA library was conducted. The set of forward and reverse primers derived from the mouse cDNA sequence of caspase-14 are set forth below:

B4 Forward primer: ATATGATATGTCAGGTGCCCCG (SEQ ID NO: 69)

Reverse primer: TTCCGGAGGGTGCTTTGGA (SEQ ID NO: 70)

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 43, line 30, with the following rewritten paragraph:

For 5' amplification

B5 Reverse primers: CCTGTATGATGTACACCTTGG (SEQ ID NO: 71)

AGAGATTCTCCAGCTTGAC (SEQ ID NO: 72)

ATCTTCTCCCTTGAGGAAG (SEQ ID NO: 73)

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 44, line 4, with the following rewritten paragraph:

For 3' amplification

B6 Forward primers: ATATGATATGTCAGGTGCCCCG (SEQ ID NO: 74)

CAAGGTGTACATCATAACAGG (SEQ ID NO: 75)